



Committee on **HOMELAND SECURITY** Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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Media Contacts: Mike Rosen, Charlotte Sellmyer
(202) 226-8417

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Jeff Duncan (R-SC) Committee on Homeland Security

“The Impact of Sequestration on Homeland Security: Scare Tactics or Possible Threat?”

**April 12, 2013
Remarks as Prepared**

Airport screening lines that are hours long, borders vulnerable to illegal aliens, stalled commerce at our border crossings; these are just some of the devastating impacts that the Administration said were inevitable because of the 5% budget cut for DHS due to sequestration. On March 1, 2013 sequestration took effect, resulting in a series of automatic, across the board spending cuts for the federal government. With a national debt growing by the second, it's time that the US Government take a hard look at it's out of control spending.

If properly planned, budget cuts, due to sequestration, should not dangerously compromise our homeland security. Doomsday rhetoric to put fear into the American people is not the way our government should operate - especially now that most of these predictions have not come to fruition. In a March 4, 2013 letter to the Governor of my home state of South Carolina, Secretary Napolitano stated: “average wait times to clear customs will begin to increase by up to 50 percent... our biggest land ports may face waits of up to 5 hours or more...”

Less than a month after the South Carolina delegation received this letter, DHS has now backtracked. Customs and Border Protection is postponing and re-evaluating its warned mass furloughs. Multi-million dollar grants are still being awarded by FEMA. TSA says it will be implementing a hiring freeze, but USAJOBS.gov still lists openings for airport security personnel throughout the country. In fact, TSA employs about 2,000 more security personnel

now than it did in 2008, a time that air travel was much higher. It seems the reports of disaster are greatly exaggerated.

And, just to be clear, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement release of 2,000 illegal aliens was not a planning decision to offset the effects of sequestration. Not only was this action done in advance of sequestration, I believe it was done purposely as another tactic to scare Congress and the American public. DHS should administer sequestration in a thoughtful manner, without jeopardizing our safety.

Although through sequestration each budget account will have to be cut equally, the Department does have flexibility within those accounts to reduce spending to programs with lower priority. Not to mention, components may carry over tens of millions of dollars each year, which is never talked about, but which may also help the DHS offset current spending reductions.

Most recently, we have also heard much talk from DHS on implementing security in a “risk-based” way. Yet the Department has, for the most part, shied away from implementing Sequester with a risk-based approach. Instead, some of the components’ plans seek to “share the pain” first and foremost. This approach is nonsensical; especially when it means allowing dangerous criminal aliens awaiting deportation back on the streets and holes in our border security unplugged. Why not consider a risk-based approach where our greatest risks and vital travel locations are mitigated to the maximum extent possible.

And as pointed out in this Subcommittee’s first hearing in February, the Department has many wasteful and duplicative programs it can choose from to reduce spending, whether through its procurement and acquisition process or through its grants management. Recently, Senator Tom Coburn also reminded us that DHS spends taxpayer dollars for thousands of man-hours of work that are never performed through various types of administrative and other leave.

In advance of sequestration, the Department had adequate time to properly plan so that its core missions and operations would not be negatively impacted. Let me be clear: Sequestration was the result of the August 2011 Debt Ceiling deal known as the Budget Control Act. August 2011. Let’s see – that was 18 months prior to the implementation of the Sequester. I know that government agencies *hoped* that sequestration wouldn’t happen. In fact, for months, the Administration used “hope” as its strategy.

Hope may be a nice campaign slogan but is a sorry management strategy.

Sequestration is yet another example of DHS failing to effectively communicate to the American people. All the contradictions make your head spin. DHS said no amount of planning would mitigate the effects of sequestration. But planning is now taking place to do just that. The

Administration also opposed any flexibility to “dull some of the pain.” Yet DHS is considering reprogramming requests. I hope the Department can clarify what to date has been complete confusion for the American people.

Finally, I believe that our men and women, on the front-lines, protecting our homeland are focused and resourceful individuals that can rise to the challenge of protecting the homeland within this budgetary climate. The Department must ensure that our boots on the ground are provided the necessary resources to complete their mission. If that means cutting inefficient, wasteful programs, I welcome those initiatives. Hard working American families have had to make cuts to their budgets. Even my Congressional office was able to cut 15% of its budget on top of mandatory cuts by operating our office like a business.

DHS should take a page from the private sector when implementing cuts due to Sequester.

I appreciate the participation of our distinguished witnesses here today and am eager to hear about the Department’s sequestration planning efforts, and our current state of homeland security. It is critical in this time of financial tightening, that we make sure that our infrastructure is protected, that our borders and airports are secure, and that we are able to fully support the American people without unnecessary spending.

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